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SOME POINTS IN LINGUISTIC PSYCHOLOGY.

A. F. CHAMBERLAIN, PH. D.

Whilst lying awake at night in the region of Kootenay, British Columbia, the writer was but too often made aware of the presence of owls by their loud and expulsive hoots. After listening for some time one evening to the sonorous *tu-whit-tu-whit-tu-whu* of these nocturnal minstrels, it suddenly occurred to him to ask his Kootenay Indian companion what the owls were saying. He responded without hesitation that the owl spoke two things: (a) *k'sētlkēnētl pātłkē*; (b) *kātskakītl pātłkē*. The meaning of these phrases the writer is not able to explain as yet (but *pātłkē* = woman). The owl's note did not seem to vary any, although the Indian declared the owl said the two different things.

By and by the writer, without being conscious of any particular effort on his part, ceased to hear the *tu-whit-tu-whit-tu-whu*, so familiar to him, and the sounds that reached his ears were: *k'sētlkēnētl pātłkē*, *kātskakītl pātłkē*, these phrases, with the exception of the word *pātłkē*, being before entirely unknown to him, and he being ignorant of their real signification. Moreover, by a very slight effort, he was able to interchange these sounds, and to hear at will the common English or the Kootenay Indian rendering of the owl's cry. The writer took particular cognizance of the fact at the time, and when returning by the C. P. R. made the experiment of repeating words and stanzas of verse with different stress and accentuation to the series of noises made by the wheels of the cars as they reached the end of each rail. He found that, be the measure of the verses what it might, the correspondence between it and the click of the rails could still be maintained.

Mr. Cameron, of Toronto University, informed the writer, when discussing the matter, that he had noticed that similar effects were produced by experimenting in a like manner with the ticking of a clock or any noise of that kind.

The possibility of shifting from Kootenay to English in the case of the owl's cry may be susceptible of explanation in this way, partly at least. Sir Daniel Wilson¹ has recorded a similar case—it would be exactly the same if the writer's Indian had been able to hear the *tu-whit-tu-whit-tu-whu*.

"Oronyhateka, an educated Mohawk Indian, in replying to some queries addressed to him relative to his native language, thus writes me in reference to the *Caprimulgus vociferus*, or whip-poor-will: 'When I listen with my Indian ears it seems to me utterly impossible to form any other word from an imitation of its notes than *kwa-kor-yeuh*, but when I put on my English ears I hear the bird quite distinctly saying *whip-poor-will*.' Assickinack, an educated Odahwah Indian, wrote the same cry—heard nightly throughout the summer in the American forests—*wha-oo-nah*, and an Englishman, recently arrived in Canada, who listened to this cry for the first time, without being aware of the popular significance attached to it, wrote it down at my request, *eh-poo-weh*."

It is evident that a psychological study of onomatopœia would lead to some interesting and valuable results.

Some nine months ago the writer conducted a short series of experiments in this line. A series of unmeaning collections of letters (pronounced in the ordinary English fashion) were given one by one to the subject, and he was requested to state the sound which he thought was best represented by the group of letters given him. Following is the result in three cases:

¹ Prehistoric Man, 3rd ed. (1876) II. 365.

A.

WORD USED.	SOUNDS THOUGHT OF BY SUBJECTS.		
	SUBJECT No. I.	SUBJECT No. II.	SUBJECT No. III.
Brův.	Dog barking.	None.	Sound made by pushing the hand or fist along a board or a piece of cloth.
Chlíp.	Ring of metal; snap of thin razor blades.	None.	Chirping of a chipmunk.
Glab.	Dropping of something semi-liquid, nearer the solid than the liquid state.	Croaking of a frog.	Clapping of the hands together.
Göp.	Upsetting of a bowl of mush.	Sound made by a man gulping down something.	Sound made by a German drinking beer.
Hěz.	Puffing, expelling the breath forcibly.	Sound made by a bumble-bee.	Noise made by twisting a wisp of dried hay.
Hůth.	Same as <i>hez</i> , but more strongly.	The sound a man makes when he wishes another to keep quiet.	Hiss of a goose.
Jal.	None.	None.	One of the lower notes of an organ.
Kig.	Noise made in trying to suppress laughter; the gurgle of any liquid.	The sound vinegar makes running out of a barrel.	A sudden blow on something not especially hard.
Lūs.	Striking with a "swish"; the idea of a cloth striking something and winding around it.	Hiss of a snake.	Stroke of a plane, or the stroke of a broom on the floor.
Snóm.	A resonant sound in a lower note.	None.	Sneezing.
Splan.	A blow against a door; a blow followed by vibration.	None.	Striking two tins together.
Thřín.	A snapping sound, not sharp.	None.	The twang of a violin string.
Yöz.	None.	None.	The squeak of a badly oiled vice when being screwed up.
Zěm.	Noise made by a nail flying through the air.	Buzz of a spindle.	Sound of a buzz-saw.
Züt.	None.	None.	The breaking of a fiddle string.

The subjects experimented upon were members of the university, and gave their answers almost immediately.

The same three subjects were further requested to state upon what thing they would confer the name in question as being most appropriate, and also to state what word each of these meaningless groups of letters called up by its sound. The results were as follows:

B.

WORD USED.	GIVEN AS A NAME BY SUBJECTS.		
	SUBJECT I.	SUBJECT II.	SUBJECT III.
Brŭv.	A mountain.	A brother.	A sturdy character.
Chĭlp.	A very "fresh" person.	A child.	The idea of active or brisk.
Glab.	A person who talks too much.	Foolish chatter.	Something powerful.
Gŏp.	A horse.	A "gawk"; a country fellow.	A pebble.
Hez.	A goose; a snake.	A bumble-bee.	Something waste or wild.
Hŭth.	As an adjective to something held in contempt.	A horse.	Sulkiness.
Jal.	Glass.	A girl.	A vessel for containing liquids.
Kĭg.	The gurgle of any liquid.	A carriage.	A dog.
Lŭsh.	Noise made in wading through water.	Wife.	A liquid.
Snŏm.	The tolling of a bell.	A cow.	A storm.
Splan.	A horse.	A plough.	A level plain.
Thrĭn.	A sleigh.	A rope.	An uproar.
Yŏz.	A bumble-bee.	A hog.	A cow.
Zĕm.	A cow.	A watch.	A house.
Zŭt.	A flash of lightning.	An axe.	A deep ravine or canyon.

C.

WORD USED.	SUGGESTED TO SUBJECT I.	SUGGESTED TO SUBJECT II.	SUGGESTED TO SUBJECT III.
Brův.	Brother.	Brother.	Brave; love.
Chřlp.	None.	Child.	Child; Chiltern hundreds.
Glab.	Glob.	Blab.	Blab; glade.
Hěz.	Es. (Ger.)	None.	Has; fez.
Göp.	Stop.	Gap.	God; got.
Hüth.	Huff.	House.	Heath; huff.
Jal.	Jell. (v.)	Girl.	Jail; jelly.
Křg.	Kick.	Keg.	Kick; keg.
Lūs.	Löss. (Ger.)	Lass.	Fus; luscious.
Snöm.	Snob; numb.	Snob.	Snow; snot.
Splan.	Splash.	Explain.	Plan; plain.
Thřín.	None.	String.	Thin.
Yöz.	Yes.	You.	Ya-a-s. (Yes.)
Zěm.	Zim.	Gem.	Zenana; zed.
Zřt.	Soot.	Slut.	But; slut.

Educated men of the nineteenth century may not be gifted with excessive powers of onomatopœic naming, but the short series of experiments gives hope of much better results in the future. The difference in ideas and sounds called up is considerable, and taken in connection with the great variation in onomatopœia amongst savage and uncultured races seems to demand further and more searching investigation, particularly in the direction of rhythm.